

Lucy Wong
Date February 23rd, 2017
DDS Cuts

Good evening,

Thank you to the co-chairs, Senator Osten, Senator Formica, and Representative Walker, and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee. I am testifying today to urge the committee to reject the \$25 million in cuts that the Governor has proposed to DDS.

My name is Lucy Wong. I am the mother of 56 year old Michael Wong who lives in a DDS group home.

Mike is 6 feet tall, is a strong man, and can become aggressive when he is upset. Turning his care over to private sector workers could have a very negative effect on his life, and consequently on my life also.

Mike has been under the care of a private agency in the past, and the results were disastrous. In order to live peacefully and safely, Mike needs to have clear cut rules, that are applied consistently by all who deal with him. Such was not the case with the private sector workers, whose frequent turnover made life difficult for Mike. He became so aggressive during home visits that we were unable to have him home at all. One staff person was unaware of this fact and brought Mike unannounced to our house, an act that could have caused him to become aggressive had anyone been visiting that we had not told him about.

It became dangerous for me to take Mike anywhere in the car. He would sometimes grab the steering wheel, or would try to jump out while the car was in motion.

Mike has a myriad of issues regarding food and was living in an apartment at the time. After being dropped off with enough groceries for a week, Mike would either eat all the food at once, or throw it all away. He was often seen wandering the streets of Danielson very late at night. One staff person had a problem with alcohol and I would learn later from Mike that this person did not always show up when he was scheduled to be on duty, leaving Mike to his own devices. Mike began to hang around the home of someone in the community who befriended him. Mike became angry when that person was not home and smashed a valuable stained glass window in her house, causing her to call the police.

One staff person knew that Mike became angry if the staff had coffee, without any being provided for Mike. This person parked, with his car windows open, holding a visible cup of coffee, where he knew Mike would see his car. Mike reached into the car, grabbed the man's shirt, and shook him in a way that left the man with a sore shoulder. The man then complained to us that he couldn't work because of the injury, and did not know how he was going to survive. It was clear to us that he was hoping we would give him some money.

Mike bothered the other residents of apartments in his building so much that he was moved three times within a few months.

Finally, after walking through the building where his 3rd apartment was located and banging on doors in the middle of the night, Mike was placed in a DDS group home. He immediately became calmer, and it was once more safe for us to have him home for visits, including an overnight visit at Christmastime. I believe that it was the clear standards that were set for Mike, and the consistent application of those standards by all the staff, that helped Mike reach his full potential. He became the cheerful, cooperative, and sociable, person that he is today. With frequent staff turnover, such as happens in the private sector, this was not likely to happen.

The obvious solution is to stop cutting DDS. I urge you to reject the cuts requested in the Governor's budget and work with us going forward to find a way to help us provide the best care to our families.